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Programme engages teen girls on health matters



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KUALA LUMPUR: Civil servant Jevaratnam Baby has come across one too many teenage girls who are unaware of HIV/AIDS.

A discussion with his superior led him to initiate the "Manisnya Menjadi Gadis" session for teenage girls to teach them not only about the virus, but also other basic health matters.

"I was shocked to discover that out of the 94,414 HIV positive patients in the country, 12% are young women.

"The programme seeks to engage students via a casual sharing session," the 30-year-old said at SMK Convent Sentul yesterday.

Jevaratnam, who works with the Education Department, initiated the session in line with the Government's efforts to encourage its officers to conduct community and social responsibility programmes.

The half-day session was split into three



Getting it right: Foo (left) measuring her classmate's chest to determine the right bra size for her during the second module of the programme.

modules – awareness on HIV/AIDS, how to wear a bra and managing romantic relationships.

The first module by former nurse Saudah Sahrom and HIV patient Maliga (not her real name) was a hit among the students.

Among the 110 Form Four students who took part was Magdalene Cruz, who said that she was touched when Maliga spoke about how she had contracted the virus.

"My 21-year-old brother died last year after suffering from the disease for two years.

Maliga's talk reminded me of him," she said.

Also present at the talk was Foo Zi Kuan, 16, who enjoyed the second module by SK Bukit Beruang, Malacca, teacher Nor Azlina Abdul Aziz.

"It is a rare discussion topic in families, let alone in school. The interactive session and casual setting added to the fun," she said.

Jevaratnam hoped that the attendees would impart the knowledge to their family and friends, adding that he was planning to have similar sessions in other schools.